DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 135 257 FL 008 431

AUTHOR Bagnole, John W.
TITLE TEFL, Perceptions and the Arab World, with a Case Study of the University of Garyounis (Benghazi).
INSTITUTION American Friends of the Middle East, Inc., Washington, D.C.
REPORT NO AFME-OP-3
PUB DATE Jan 77
NOTE 57p.
AVAILABLE FROM American Friends of the Middle East, Suite 100, 1717 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036 ($2.00)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 Plus Postage. HC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Arabic; *Arabs; Coeducation; Cultural Factors; Curriculum; *English (Second Language); *Foreign Culture; Interference (Language Learning); Language Attitudes; Language Instruction; Language Teachers; Language Usage; Non Western Civilization; Second Language Learning; Sex Discrimination; *Sociocultural Patterns; Student Attitudes; *Teacher Attitudes; *Values
IDENTIFIERS *Middle East

ABSTRACT

This paper prepares teachers of English as a foreign language for many of the conditions they will encounter while teaching in the Arab world. The general theme is that attitudes of understanding and tolerance can lead to substantive improvements in professional morale and classroom effectiveness. Emphasizing the different regional factors and cultural sources of many areas known to be problematic, the paper identifies and analyzes such attitudinal and perceptual concepts as time, "never-say-no-ism," expatriate feelings of temporariness and alienation, education as a perceived value, the image of teachers, and the role and image of women. Factors affecting linguistic pre-conditionings and their effects on teaching are evaluated as well. Drawing upon the accumulated and multi-national experiences of English teachers in Libya (case study), Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, and other Arab countries, the paper also examines various practical aspects of teaching which include coeducation, familiarity with students, cheating, and the role of EFL in the curriculum. In addition, advice is provided for dealing with bureaucracies. Appended to the paper is a list of suggested readings which treat relevant linguistic and regional topics. (Author/CLK)

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ED135257

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TEFL, perceptions, and the arab world

by
john w. bagnole

FL008431

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TEFL, PERCEPTIONS, AND THE ARAB WORLD

with

A Case Study of the University of Garyounis (Benghazi)

by

John W. Bagnole

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Washington D.C.
January 1977

Towards sundown we came out of the valley
Along that track
Not knowing then where it led to, when we saw
The stone circles, the heaped cairns of stone, the stones
Arranged like coracles on the dry slopes.
The brown hills were empty. Only a buzzard
Stood in the sky, perceiving its territory.

from "Qasīda on the Track to Msus"
by Anthony Thwaite

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The author wishes to thank the staff of the American Friends of the Middle East, especially Joan Borum, David L. Davies, and Jean Simons, for their patience, assistance, and constructive comments.

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INTRODUCTION

Challenge and frustration are two sides of the same professional coin. By helping to bring into focus some of the past misunderstandings and misperceptions which have been prevalent among Westerners who have worked in the Arab world, the following ideas are intended to reduce those elements that favor frustration, thereby releasing energies to deal with the real determinants of professional challenge. While the paper was originally designed as an aid to American teachers of English in the Arab world, it will be noted that many of the remarks and conclusions are applicable to perceptual differences and related difficulties which quite obviously surpass the professional and geographical limits of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) in the Middle East and North Africa. The nature of attitudinal differences is such that it affects the engineer, the doctor, the student and others with a common Western background as well as the teacher. Moreover, many of the points discussed hold valid for many parts of the Third World and the developing nations in general. TEFL teachers and prospective TEFLers who are particularly interested in teaching at the university level may find the remarks of even greater relevance.

Going abroad to teach does not merely imply a change of location; the implications are much greater and often overwhelming. Such a change necessitates working within a new and unfamiliar educational system based on French, British, Italian, Turkish, and Arab models (or a combination of any of the above). Also there are corresponding innovations in the grading system, choice of textbooks, multinational composition of the staff[1], administrative structure and organization (e.g., rigid centralization), availability of supplies, and so on.

Some of the differences are much more subtle: the actual value placed on education may vary and have an incalculable impact on study habits, faculty-student and faculty-administration relations. It may also be reflected in the degree of cooperation and professional understanding which is present. In addition, the difference in the perception of time has often had a staggering effect on fresh, efficiency-oriented, Western

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1 No perceptual difference could be more glaring than to have a staff of British, American, Canadian, and Irish teachers constantly "correcting" one another as to English usage and pronunciation. Although this is often done in jest, each member may actually feel his personal and national images are at stake. This defensive attitude may be translated into squabbles over choice of books, exam questions, syllabi, etc. French purists also have their own divine insight into how English ought to be spoken.

teachers who, initially unaware of the difference, often become frustrated, irate, and/or aggressively disenchanted, to say the least.

The success of social relations, both professional and private, will often hinge upon the ability to perceive and accept differing concepts of privacy, friendship, and a host of other intangibles, such as honor, shame, responsibility, maturity, and image.

It should be noted here that while we are concerned primarily with Arabs (and there are non-Arab and non-Arabophone minorities in the region), there is no monolithic Arab culture, and it would be a mistake to assume that any particular point mentioned is equally applicable to every Arab country. The Arab world is in a state of transition, and economic and educational resources vary from country to country and even within one country. Moreover, the cultural mosaic of the area insists that historical, religious, and sectarian differences alter perceptions and preconditionings. It is not to be supposed that a Tunisian student from Gafsa in the Sahara or a Libyan student from the Fezzan in the course of studying the English language at the University of Tunis or al-Fātiḥ will have arrived equipped with perceptions of the world and language learning identical to those of a Coptic Cairene studying at the American University in Cairo (AUC). Nor would one expect a French-speaking Algerian Berber studying at the University of Algiers to share the same linguistic problems with, say, a Yemeni student at the newly created Ṣanaʿāʾ University.

Needless to say, even within a single country, individuals vary with respect to educational background and experience; while one may find it nearly impossible to communicate with some individuals on a shared perceptual level, ease of communication is possible with others. None of the comments discussed here, then, should be expected to hold true at all times or in all places. Nevertheless, certain patterns do emerge, and it is to these that we will primarily address ourselves.

It is also worth noting that we are concerned both with Western perceptions of the area, as well as the impact of host perceptions of, and consequently on, the behavior of the arriving teacher. Often both views are grossly distorted.

This writer remembers quite vividly his initial apprehension about accepting a post at the University of Garyounis. Libya and Colonel Muʿammar

al-Qadhdhāfī were always synonymous in the Western press, and the latter was consistently depicted in the most deliberately unflattering of terms.[2] What was one to expect, then, walking into a university where the student body consisted essentially of Libyans, Palestinians, and Egyptian radicals? The atmosphere both within the university and without must be electric... fanatical...at least, this is the picture one would imagine if his perceptions were based exclusively on the Western press.

Perhaps fortunately, perhaps disappointingly, the Western image of Libya coincides very little with the reality. The author found Libyans to be warm, friendly, and eager to help. Moreover, the recent arrival of urbanization and the lack of a developed tourist trade in Libya have contributed, at least partially, to the pervasive air of innocence, almost naïveté, which envelops the population. The absence of hustlers, would-be guides, and aggressive merchants is a welcomed change. In addition to this general sense of relaxation, the university students were courteous, friendly, and attracted to Western staff members with whom they could feel free to discuss social and personal matters.

As a result, one is forced to wonder not only about the number of American teachers who have been dissuaded from going to a country such as Libya because of distorted perceptions cultivated, for whatever reasons, in the West, but also about the cumulative impact of these distortions on the existing Arab stereotype. It might be added that Arabs are very conscious of and sensitive to the image they project, both among themselves and _vis-à-vis_ the Occident. Moreover, just as there is no monolithic Arab culture,

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2 The Colonel has often been described as "mercurial", "fanatical", and "unpredictable". While these descriptions are convenient for stereotyping, it is more interesting to note that "Libya's Qadhdhāfī" has not even been accorded a consistent orthography (Qaddafi, Khaddafi, Kaddafi, Gaddafi, Gadafi, Kathafi, _etc._) all of which makes for an even more foreign, confusing, and reprehensible bugaboo with which to deal.

In a similar way, it would be a mistake to consider Libya as just a desert wasteland. This vast country is overflowing with magnificent scenery in the forms of long, virgin coastlines, green mountains, forests, verdant plains and oases, not to mention the desert itself which is variegated in color, texture, and geological formations.

Moreover, Libya is rich in historical sites of interest: the marvelous ruins of the Greek and Roman cities of Cyrene, Apollonia, Tūkra, Tulmaytha, Leptis Magna, and Sabrātah (not to mention the innumerable outlying sites in the desert and mountains); ancient Berber towns such as Nālūt, and Yafran; the remains of the Garamante civilization at Garma; and Islamic and desert centers at Jaghbūb, Kufra, Ghadāmas, Ghāt, Sabhā, and the Sanūsī zawiyas which dot the country. Also of interest are the prehistoric caves with wall paintings and etchings, troglodyte dwellings, and Turkish and Italian forts. Finally, there is the contemporary vibrance of a modernizing Arab society with its infinite variety and wonders.

there is no single Arab archetype.

Because teaching opportunities and experiences in the region do differ so enormously, it would be beyond the scope of this paper to examine each situation individually. Therefore, it was decided to adopt a "peripatetic" case study approach, utilizing the University of Garyounis (Benghazi, Libya) as a specific source from which intermittent examples are freely drawn and then compared with other universities in the area. The technique has the advantage of maintaining a certain thematic continuity as we walk through the various points under discussion.

What is now known as the University of Garyounis[3] originally formed the main campus of the University of Libya which was founded in 1955 with the establishment of a Faculty of Education and Arts in Benghazi. Other faculties grew up in Tripoli and Benghazi, and in August, 1973, the University of Libya was split into two fully independent universities with campuses at Tripoli and Benghazi.

Today, the ultra-modern University of Garyounis is itself composed of two campuses at Benghazi and Baidā'. The Benghazi campus is the site of the Faculties of Arts, Economics and Commerce, Law, Medicine, Science, Agriculture, Engineering, and Dentistry, while the Baidā' campus, 200 kilometers away in the Jabal al-Akhḍar, houses the Faculties of Arabic Language and Islamic Studies and Education. Degrees conferred are primarily at the undergraduate level although some graduate work is done in the Departments of Arabic Language, Ancient History, and Philosophy.

Symptomatic of the rapidly expanding enrollment figures for higher education in the Arab world, the Benghazi campus of the University of Garyounis has increased from 31 students in 1955-56 to 8,825 in 1975-76.[4] Moreover, the percentage of women has increased for the same period from 0% to 15%. The Baidā' campus currently enrolls 1,270 students.

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3 In the spring of 1976, the University of Benghazi was officially renamed Garyounis (Qaryūnis) University while the University of Tripoli became al-Fātiḥ University.

4 Figures are taken from Statistical Bulletin, Office of the Registrar, University of Garyounis, (Benghazi: University of Garyounis Press, 1975) and University of Benghazi, Institutional Report Series, (Washington, D.C.: American Friends of the Middle East, 1976.)

Notable features of the University are the mixed classes, the multinational composition of the faculty (75% is non-Libyan with a large number of Egyptians) and student body (mostly Libyan with a 15% non-Libyan enrollment composed primarily of Egyptians and Palestinians), the policies of free admission (for Libyans and some non-Libyans), free health care, and the granting of generous monthly stipends.

The University is lavishly housed in the beautiful new University City, a thousand-acre site 9 kilometers south of Benghazi, which includes further plans for dormitories, new faculties, and athletic and recreational facilities, in addition to the existing faculties, administration, and library.

The goals of the University of Garyounis are similar to those of universities in other Arab states: to improve the quality of higher education, to train qualified personnel, and to further the social, cultural, and economic development of (Libyan) Arab society. Moreover, being an integral part of the national educational system, the University has also been incorporated into the political structure, most clearly evidenced by the establishment of a hierarchical system of Popular Committees (Lijān Sha'abiyyah) within the University in which students, teachers, and workers are to participate with the administration in the decision-making process.

In many ways, the situation at the University of Garyounis is typical of English language teaching at other institutions of higher learning in the Arab world, and as such it reflects many consistent and pertinent realities. At the same time, many factors peculiar to the University of Garyounis and to Libya coexist alongside these consistent realities, and these essentially Libyan features will serve to highlight the kinds of uniquities which may be encountered.

TIME

Any attempt to delineate areas of perception and attitude which often present difficulties to Westerners in general, and Americans in particular, might well begin with the concept of time. The problem arises from the fact that fewer clear distinctions are made with respect to time by Arabs:

> His (the Arab's) scale has only three discernible points to our eight. His sets seem to be: no time at all; now (or present), which is of varying duration; and forever (too long). In the Arab world it is almost impossible to get someone to experience the difference between waiting a long time and a very long time. Arabs simply do not make the temporal distinction.5

Academically, the Arab view of time has been alternately attributed to various factors: a religious submission to predestination and the will of Allah, the result of formality and rigidity marked by an aversion to the unknown and a predilection for authoritarianism, cultural lethargy induced by hostile climatic conditions, etc. Despite these various interpretations as to cause, there seems to be considerable consensus as to the characteristics of the traditional concept of time which has come to be labeled an "atomistic" approach: i.e., each instant of time is seen as being an independent "snapshot" which falls into the chronology of life one after the other with little or no predictable linkage. "Time is what occurs before and after a given point."[6] The atomistic approach has been used to explain a whole gamut of perceptually related phenomena ranging from the lack of perspective in art to the inability to formulate a priori cause and effect. Leaving the more cosmic causal discussions to science, it is worth noting some of the practical implications of this idea.

Take as a simple example the case of a banking holiday. In the United States, several days before the closing of a bank for a holiday, say Thanksgiving or Christmas, a notice to that effect is usually posted in a conspicuous place as a reminder if the holiday is already well known and merely as information if the closing may not be known or readily assumed

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5 Edward T. Hall, The Silent Language (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1959), p. 176.

6 Ibid., p. 183.

(e.g., in the case of remodelling, inventory, or illness). The intention is to prevent (the "pre-" prefix here is doubly exact and illustrative) customers from turning up at the institution only to find it closed. This preventive measure is considered both good business (because it will reduce the number of irate customers who show up) and a common courtesy (the bank's staff would expect a similar notification from fellow businessmen with respect to their activities).

Here in the West we find work hours posted, as well as schedules, corrections, announcements, and publicity of future events. We are urged to "buy early", "send early", "make reservations", "use zip codes", and "let our fingers do the walking", all in anticipation of avoiding problems and maximizing convenience by minimizing our loss of time and costly delays. Time is not only money, it is leisure and happiness. When the system fails in the West - the bank closes five minutes early, the film starts ten minutes late, we are passed from one phone extension to another - we are annoyed and interpret this as a breakdown, however minor or for whatever reason, in the natural and quantifiable programming of life. In the Arab world these "failures" may appear more frequently, and patterns can be discerned. The frequency varies, but the Westerner must be ready, willing, and able to roll with the temporal punches.

In Benghazi, for example, one could only learn what the latest film attractions were by actually going to the different movie theatres or kiosks to look at the posters or else by asking a friend.[7] The posters or coming attractions shown in the theatre usually correctly identified the films which were coming, but did not give the date or precise order of appearance. Nor did one know for how long a film would remain. Project this uncertainty from the cinema to daily life in its various forms: post offices (e.g., the availability of aerogrammes or particular stamps), athletic events, shop openings and closings, dry cleaning pick-ups, utility payments, and most importantly for us here, the activities and interactions at the university

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7 Also of significant inconvenience for the Westerner is the necessity of getting habituated to a virtually non-telephonic life style, socially as well as professionally. For example, one constantly "drops in" on friends without notice, and the practice is, of course, reciprocated. Spontaneity becomes a part of life.

or school, and the magnitude of the problem becomes awesome for the uninitiated or impatient Western mind.

What finally emerges is a pattern of ad hoc-ism: things are done on the spur of the moment, extemporaneously, or as soon as "possible". The big difference is that this connotation of "possible" often includes an aspect of convenience which is not implied in the Western sense. Thus, the Arab evaluation of the use of time is also different. Arabs will often consider drinking coffee and chatting in a café as "doing something" whereas the Westerner may view it as "doing nothing" and certainly not as an option when there is work to be done.[8] In the Arab world, time is considered to be a more flexible commodity and can be bought, sold, and traded for the competing exigencies of the moment.

The conclusion ought to be not that cause and effect or foresight cannot be accomplished, but that the willingness to carry out these processes, for various culturally valid reasons, is not there. This may give the Westerner an impression of fecklessness, inefficiency, and even obtuseness, but that would be a culturally egocentric and limited view of motivation.

Moreover, the reasons for the apparent undesirability of unswerving, Western-style efficiency (which varies a great deal itself!) can often be more complex than a superficial examination would reveal. For example, in Benghazi, often when the writer would attempt to buy traveler's checks he would be told, "Fine. Pick them up tomorrow." Tomorrow is sometimes too late and sometimes just plain inconvenient. Usually oral insistence would produce the checks in half an hour. So why the initial put-off until tomorrow? It is very likely that the clerk, knowing that the checks have to go through four or five different people for processing (here we get into another whole set of problems, the bureaucratic ones), has decided to cover himself in the event that the process breaks down, time-wise, somewhere else along the line. For example, if he originally told you to come back in thirty minutes, and you returned to find your checks were not ready , you would vent your frustration on him, even though he was not personally responsible for the delay. Also, if the clerk, working in his more casual temporal

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8 Hall, op. cit., p. 178.

frame of reference, had told a Libyan or other fellow Arab to return tomorrow (bukra), he probably would have agreed to this, as this is what he is used to.

Before examining how this concept of time may interfere with teaching activities, a few more examples which dramatize the point will be provided. It is felt that these illustrations are important because in a new environment (and it might be added that the climate of many Arab countries is hot, and sang-froid is a necessary antidote for survival), daily frustrations can build up. If not dealt with quickly and instinctually, they can effect professional morale and, consequently, effectiveness.

Often in Benghazi, it was remarked that retail goods would appear in shops and then disappear with a considerable delay before their reappearance, leading one to believe that goods were often ordered only after their actual retail depletion. This phenomenon occurred so frequently that the word "pattern" can legitimately be applied. Even taking into account delays in transport and delivery, it seems obvious that the projection and expectation of stock depletion were often ignored and taken in stride.

The same principle becomes more critical when applied to the ordering of textbooks for courses at a university where the failure to order books in the spring or summer will ineluctably lead to a lack or insufficiency of texts the following fall. (As of December 17, 1975, English classes in the Faculty of Economics and Commerce at the University of Garyounis were still without books. The annual repetition of this occurrence and its duplication in other faculties and departments indicate a pattern.) Without books, teachers feel frustrated, and, what's more, the lack of books may affect the class syllabus and the psychology of the students who, often raised on rote learning, feel the need to actually possess a book.

Another example of ad hoc-ism is apparent in the way the bureaucracy functions. The administrative chinoiserie is compounded by cultural procedures and irregularities. Often it will occur that in applying for a visa, identity card, driver's license, and other official documents, you will be requested to provide Item X, say a completed form or a birth certificate, in fulfill-

ment of the legal requirements. The next day, upon presentation of Item X, you will then be informed that you must now present Item Y which, though readily available,is, of course, at home or only obtainable from another office. If you had only been told to bring it during your previous visit, you could have presented both X and Y simultaneously. Now you have lost another day, and after this has happened several times, you may begin to feel frustration mounting. Geometrically. (Another factor to bear in mind is that offices and commercial establishments are usually closed from 12:00 noon to 4:00 p.m. or from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. depending on the location and season.)

This quotidian frustration, though, can often be undermined if the operations are seen to include cultural difference. Also, it is surely true that as irate, perplexed, and incredulous Westerners stand pulling their hair out and shouting at bureaucrats, demanding to know why two days are necessary to do what could have been done in one day, these very same bureaucrats, equally irate, perplexed, and incredulous, are wondering why one day or one trip is better than two. The two parties are separated by a temporal chasm, a different concept of time and, if this is correctly grasped, many embarrassing and angry moments can be avoided. For example, when requested to bring Item X, you can then immediately inquire: "Will I need any other papers (Items Y and Z) after that?" Make people iterate the steps involved. Ask colleagues what procedures they went through; however, do not assume that the process has not changed. Experience has shown that it is wise to arm yourself with all documents which could possibly be connected with the operation to be undertaken. Passports, identity cards, residence visas, etc. should always be taken along.

At the University of Garyounis, questions of time and ad hoc-ism have presented problems to Westerners and Arabs alike. An epic problem has been to try to devise a university calendar. The intricacies involved are numerous, and many are not directly related to differences of time perception (e.g.,administrative capabilities, shifting national priorities, and military training for students). The gravity of the problem is compounded by its annual reoccurrence.

In Benghazi, teachers are instructed, sometimes by telegram, to appear

on September 1st which is itself a national holiday (Anniversary of the First of September Revolution). This writer arrived in Benghazi on August 31, 1973. His first class was held on November 12th, and that was limited to the second year students in the Faculty of Economics and Commerce; the first year students began December 9th. During the period from September 1st to November 12th, several starting dates were announced and then postponed. When the year actually got under way, holidays would often be revealed the day before or, in some cases, teachers would enter a classroom to find that that very day had been declared a holiday. One of the major problems facing the teacher, then, is to design a syllabus with sufficient flexibility to include a large number of unknown interruptions, but, as is obvious, this places an extremely difficult and impractical burden on the teachers and, ultimately, on the students.

The "unknown interruptions" included political disturbances and disruptions (e.g., the Cultural Revolution of spring, 1973; student demonstrations of spring, 1975; ad hoc visits by government officials, and ad hoc ceremonies), religious holidays (in the case of Libya, these are still dependent on the physical sighting of the moon, although this practice has been supplanted by official designations of holidays in most Arab countries), visiting lecturers, sports events, non-Libyan national holidays (e.g., Syrian Independence Day, Sudanese Independence Day), and other miscellaneous occasions such as visits by foreign dignitaries.[9]

Not only does ad hoc-ism upset the pace of classroom work, but it can cause discontent among the staff if, for example, semester break is announced the day before it begins, and exit and/or reentry visas are required for travel to and from the country. Staff morale is directly affected if faculty members are unable to plan carefully for vacations, especially in the summer when early bookings and reservations are important. If time is lost in the beginning or throughout the course of the year, then it will probably be recouped at the end of the scholastic year.*

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9 The writer remembers when classes were suddenly suspended in Bongouanou, The Ivory Coast (1971), when the national bicycle race had its lap-of-the-day finish in that town, and everyone was expected to turn out to greet the riders!

* Several months after this sentence was written in the original draft of this paper, the author learned that the June 30th termination date for the 1975-76 university calendar in Benghazi was extended to July 15th. Teachers expecting to leave on or about July 1st had to alter their plans accordingly.

The ad hoc calendar also affects test dates and the availability of students going abroad for summer programs and advanced degrees.[10] Another danger in not having a fixed calendar is that students may come to imagine the situation is similar everywhere. One manifestation of this perceptual transfer is the very late, often last minute, filing of applications by Arab students to American and British universities with the obvious results. Many students will be completely ignorant of the concept of deadlines. Or else thay may assume that although deadlines exist, they are not enforced.

Perceptions of time can also affect the hiring of teachers. If needs and actual requirements in terms of numbers of teachers are not foreseen accurately, keeping pace with the growth of student enrollment and staff departures, insurmountable problems can result. Sound policies of hiring and firing must be devised. These problems can become chronic as is evidenced by the English departments at the University of Garyounis. There, large annual attrition rates of departing teachers are often ignored until it is too late. Enrollment increases while insufficient numbers of teachers must "hold down the fort" and cope with larger classes until the depleted ranks are slowly replenished, often by teachers who, recruited frantically, are not adequately qualified or suitable. This untimely hiring of staff often exacerbates the ad hoc calendar problem and can result in a vicious circle: insufficient staffing postpones the start of the school year, erratic and abnormal scholastic calendars lead to frustration and uncertainty which in turn lead to more staff departures. Meanwhile, those teachers already on the site idle away their time waiting for reinforcements and wondering how such a condition was allowed to come about. The bewilderment will affect both Western and Arab staff-members with the striking difference that the Arab members will often take it in stride better than their Western colleagues. Arab staff-members are sympathetic to the Westerner's complaints, but they feel equally incapable of bringing about change.

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10 Calendar clashes can be very troublesome to those who have to administer standardized examinations such as the Graduate Record Examination or the TOEFL (Educational Testing Services, Princeton, New Jersey) for which testing dates have been planned very far in advance. The unfortunate administrator of the exam may suddenly discover that classes have been cancelled on the day scheduled for the test. Permission is needed to change test dates, and the work and complications involved can be sobering to say the least.

BUKRA, MA 'ALESH, AND IN SHA' ALLAH

An understanding of the Arab conception of time should also enable the Westerner to cope more successfully with the ubiquitous temporal triad of bukra*, ma'alesh, and in sha'allah.

Literally, bukra means "tomorrow", but to limit its sense to the coming day or even the next 24 hours would be to fall into a trap which many Westerners do, only to find themselves in frustrating and troublesome positions:

> The semantic load and distribution of the word tomorrow, as compared to bukra, is another example which points up this tendency towards vagueness. When an Egyptian is asked when he will do something and he replies bukra, he does not precisely mean 'the day after tomorrow' but rather 'some time in the future'. This is a convenient way of being indefinite; and to Americans it seems that he is really evading the issue, whereas the Egyptian really has no such intention at all. To him the future is really too remote. 'Arabs regard anyone who tries to look into the future as slightly insane...To the Arab only God knows the future and it is presumptuous to talk about it.' 11

In a society where, as we have seen, time is often placed in a lower position on a hierarchy of daily values[12], it is dangerous to insist on a Western connotation of time. The observant resident will find that a certain complacency surrounds the postponement of a deed or act. If the deed is not of an urgent nature as determined by the performer, then he may see no harm in performing it later than tomorrow at a time more suitable to himself. The bukra attitude is changing, but change is slow, and the attitude is so apparent to the visitor that it is certain to be problematic.

Awareness of an attitudinal difference or social differentiation may be of casual interest in helping to deal with the petty annoyances of daily life, but the bukra perspective can become a real pedagogic problem if counteraction is not taken in the professional context. For example, a

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* Ghudwa, ghaden and other regional expressions and variations are widespread throughout the Arab world.

11 Sosi Satian, "Problems in Teaching Concepts of Time to Egyptian Students," English Language Teaching, Vol. XXVI, No. 3 (June, 1972): p. 294.

12 Hall, op. cit., p. 224.

homework lesson assigned for "tomorrow" will very frequently not be handed in "on time", at least in the more Western concept of "on time". In the West, if an assignment is not handed in on time, you assume the student, except in extenuating circumstances, in which case the student will usually consult the teacher, has opted not to do the work and is prepared to accept the consequences. In the Arab world, it is often the case that a student will hand in an assignment a week or two after the due date, or he will submit a collection of assignments at the end of the semester "in fulfillment of the course requirements", so to speak. However, late assignments are often blatantly copied and of little value to either the student or the teacher. Teaching English in a class in which only about half of the students have done the assignment is, of course, retardative, and, if allowed to persist, may reinforce the already elastic bukra. The teacher can help implant a stricter meaning in "tomorrow" by insuring, within reason, that he is mindful of his own announced class schedule and deadlines. If you have assigned Text A and Exercise #3 for tomorrow, a great deal will be gained by doing it on the appointed day.

In the same way, meetings or events scheduled for "tomorrow" may or may not take place as intended. Postponements are frequent, and should not be unexpected. Nothing should be assumed. In April, 1974, distinguished educators and visitors from all over the world were astonished to learn on the eve and morning of the four-day opening ceremony of the spectacular new University City of the then Univerisity of Benghazi that the ceremony had been postponed until the following day.[13] This occurred after busy weeks of scheduling, the sending out of printed invitations, the drawing up of bulletins and lists of activities, and the making of airline and hotel reservations.

All in all, bukra is most healthily viewed as an indicator of the near future, and may be interpreted as "tomorrow at the earliest" or "tomorrow if possible". Of even more dubious and frightening precision is ba'd bukra

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13 The postponement was occasioned by Prime Minister Jallūd's unexpected flight to investigate the coup which had occurred in neighboring Niger with which Libya had recently signed a military pact. Jallūd was to be the guest speaker at the opening ceremony.

("after tomorrow" or "the day after tomorrow") or bukra ba'd bukra which is best rendered as "within the next couple of days". The further from the present, the greater the uncertainty, thus the greater the need for an elastic interpretation and tolerance.

If bukra contains an aspect of temporal complacency, ma'alesh can best be viewed as a normative complacency which very often includes or functions within a temporal framework. It is probably best translated as "never mind" or "it's not important", and this is the crux of the problem. Often something, a deadline, delay, or error, is considered "not important" by the Arab speaker, whereas his Western interlocutor does find the matter important. In Libya, for example, where an exit visa (only granted twice a year) is required to leave the country, a ma'alesh, in the event the visa is not ready on the expected date of delivery, is not likely to be brushed off lightly by the intended recipient.

Here the sensitivity factor enters in, and the ability to understand what an individual from another culture expects is of tremendous import. Westerners often complain about the ma'alesh factor without considering that they are equally guilty of not fulfilling host expectations of their, the Westerners', actions. What is needed, then, is a sense of cross-cultural empathy which can only be cultivated over time. Tolerance is the key word.

The third panel of the time triptych with which we are concerned is in sha'allah, which is literally translated as "God willing" or "if God wills it". However, even in a language which is peppered with idiomatic allusions to and reverential formulas about God (Allah), in sha'allah holds a special place both because of its frequency and its use as a future tense marker.

If the expression is thought of in a grammatical sense, the secularized Westerner will be less likely to feel uncomfortable in certain situations. For example: "Will my pay check be ready by tomorrow?" Answer: "In sha'allah." Or "Will the exam be given tomorrow?" Answer: "In sha'allah." If you only comprehend "God willing" and would prefer to know that your check is in the hands of a competent accountant or the examination is being taken care of by an able administrator, then you may unnec-

essarily irritate yourself. In sha'allah, a cultural reflex, should probably be interpreted as a more innocuous "if possible" or "if all goes well" or "I hope so". It is often a "yes" with a safety valve. These translations will also be of some use for students who want to translate the expression more fully, i.e., maintaining a certain degree of dubiety or unfulfilled anticipation. To answer "Yes, God willing," in English is, of course, possible, but would smack of greater deliberateness and reverence than would normally be expected, and if used repeatedly, especially as a tense marker, could legitimately be classified as a foreignism.

NEVER-SAY-NO-ISM

Another aspect of the Arab character which is familiar to many visitors is the continual affirmativeness, accord, and positive "acceptance" and "compliance" which can be termed "never-say-no-ism". Variously analyzed as a manifestation of politeness, honor, pride, or linguistic obsession, what it comes down to is a desire not to offend and to say what is desired to be heard, at least, what is perceived as being desired to be heard. Obviously, it can have close links with the time element, but it can also function independently, both socially and professionally.

A good example can be seen in the case of unspecified appointments:

> "May I come to visit you?"
> "Yes."
> "In the afternoon?"
> "Yes, if you'd like."
> "Or is the evening better?"
> "Yes, the evening is fine."
> "Maybe you would prefer to come and see me?"
> "Yes. That's better."

The above conversation describes a casual social situation and could occur anywhere (although note the repetitive affirmatives), but it occurs more in the Arab world, and the same type of affirmative response also occurs more frequently in Arab business and professional transactions than in comparable circumstances in the West.

Also, on a social level, Arabs are more likely than the Westerner to be positively committal when refusing. "Will you come to play cards tonight?" "Yes", if he intends to and very possibly "Yes" if he does not intend to. If the Westerner hasn't the slightest intention of coming to play cards, he will probably say, "No, I'm sorry, but I can't make it" or "I'm really not interested". If he hedges, it will be, "Maybe" or "If I have the time, but don't count on me". What he has done is to defuse his non-arrival by deliberately injecting an element of doubt.

The ramifications of "never-say-no-ism" can be more serious than mere procrastination or face-saving when an ultimate negative reply has been determined in the mind of the decision maker, but he still insists on taking the procrastinatory approach , perhaps in the belief that you will withdraw

your request for a pay raise, special leave, more books, or a new office before a decision has to made. Since the Arab will almost always be able to out-wait you, it may, on occasion, be necessary to show him that his delay ("Yes, bukra") will be more embarrassing and irksome for him than a mere "No, I'm sorry". This phenomenon does occur in the West, but with the following critical distinction: in the West, the side-stepping and evasion are inversely decreased as the importance of the matter increases. In the West, importance engenders precision.

To sum up, then: what we are concerned with is the ability of the American/Western teacher to handle recurrent, non-committal, and therefore unacceptable, responses (bukra) to questions and matters whose significance is such that a usually committal verbal response would be assured in a comparable situation in the teacher's own society. Alternatively, and no less disconcerting for the Westerner, are the committal responses of a positive nature which may be elicited when a negative or uncertain response would be more appropriate. The persistence of such responses and their duplication and accumulation in the various areas of daily life in a foreign setting, often under difficult conditions, can be exasperating if ignored or misinterpreted and coupled with the frustrations of time difference and eventually decisive in determining the continuation or termination of contract, either by the hiring institution or the contractee.

What this means is that the instructor must maximize his ability to contend with these behavior patterns, and this is best done, as stated above, by trying to understand the cultural, social, and, as we will see below, political preconditions and constraints which are unlike our own. Often this comprehension is not easy. At the same time, host institutions and governments should try to minimize the occurrence of situations and behavior which they know to be deleterious to the happiness and general morale of their employees. This could take the form of a Staff Affairs Office which would include a person especially qualified in handling the problems of Westerners and which could act as a clearing-house to aid in finding housing, furniture, cars, etc. A newly arrived teacher ought not to feel completely lost. Moreover, the administration should be willing to cooperate, to an extraordinary degree, if necessary, to overcome these problems which are really

cultural misunderstandings.

We can see the need of and possibility for such cooperation if we take another example of a behavior pattern which occurred at the University of Garyounis. The reference is to the habit of many Libyan students of not knocking on the door of a teacher's office before entering. In the English department of the Faculty of Arts where twenty odd English teachers (mostly British and American) had their offices in close propinquity, the habit was very evident, not only in its execution, but also in the staff's reaction to it. Most of the staff members could casually dismiss one or several episodes with a polite "Please knock before entering." ("Yes"!) However, as the pattern persisted, tempers flared, insults flew, and many an unsuspecting student was embarrassed.

Here was a classic case of differing and conflicting cultural behavior patterns which in the case of the Libyan students can probably be traced back to extremely different concepts of privacy and social expectations. The situation in question was reinforced and complicated upon the occasion of teacher-student conferences and tutorials, especially when the two were of the opposite sex, and the door was closed. Such meetings would frequently be interrupted by "janitors" or workers who had no apparent business and also entered without knocking.

This is the type of annoyance which could have been relieved by the administration making the students aware of the problem (if they hadn't already received the message from the staff itself, which was not always the case since many staff members would keep their anger bottled up inside and merely dismiss the whole business as bad upbringing!). Moreover, even if the administration's attempt at rectification had been unsuccessful, the staff would at least have known that someone did empathize and was trying to correct the situation.[14]

Failure to be aware of and within reason conform to a culturally distinct teaching situation, when combined with similar misperceptions on the part of the administration, can create an unfortunate state best described as <u>mutual disempathy</u>.

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14 An interesting note here is that the students had another habit, equally disconcerting and paradoxical to the Westerner: that of knocking on the classroom door before entering when arriving late.

Here, mutual inability to perceive the attitudes and perceptions of each other leads to a situation which exacerbates the already difficult task of effectively running and properly staffing a university in a developing country. And it should be reemphasized that this perceptual myopia affects both the administration and the faculty. If the members of the administration, who in many cases have been educated abroad, cannot comprehend the attitudes and desires of Western staff members, then there is little chance that the students will. A state of mutual disempathy in which perceptions are not grasped is not necessarily one of hostility, but it insures that staff turnover will be extensive; hence program development will atrophy, academic quality will deteriorate, progress will be reversed, and educational benefits will fail to be maximized. Mutual disempathy is a principal, but by no means the sole, cause of staff <u>malaise</u> in many departments manned by foreigners, as is often the case with language departments. Furthermore, <u>malaise</u> risks being transformed into antipathy and, ultimately, hostility. This not inevitable.

SOCIAL TABOOS

No mention has been made of socio-cultural taboos of an obvious nature. There is no intention to beat a dead horse. In many ways, the Arab world is socially more conservative than North America and parts of Europe. It is assumed that anyone going abroad to live in a new environment would read up on the history, culture, and politics of his destination before he went. (A list of some books on Islamic and Arab history and culture has been appended.) This not only provides a richer base for appreciation, but enlightens the newcomer as to the restrictions and interdictions he will encounter there. Talking with some of the previous residents would be even more helpful in learning about the various practical aspects and circuities of daily living.

There are, however, variations in social patterns within the Arab world. One example, that of alcohol, will illustrate regional variations in policy. In Libya, the manufacture, sale, and consumption of alcohol is officially prohibited despite the resourcefulness of some of the residents of that state. The same is true of Sa'udi Arabia. In Algeria, alcohol is publicly available even to Muslims in some provinces and unavailable in others. In Egypt and Lebanon, alcohol is readily available almost everywhere. Prospective teachers, then, should be aware of what kind of situation they are getting into. This may be difficult to do, but it is well worth the effort.

TEMPORARINESS AND ALIENATION

The Western teacher can go a long way towards reducing potential professional and personal malaise by avoiding psychological feelings of: 1. temporariness and 2. cultural alienation. These two feelings often, but certainly not always, go hand in hand.

Temporariness is characteristic ofthose who arrive with the idea that they will have to put up with a great deal of inconvenience and irregularity for a limited period of time. They begin counting the days remaining as soon as, or shortly after, they arrive. Then, because they know they will be leaving soon, they refuse to set up a comfortable household and try to "get by" as minimally as possible.

These unfortunates are often motivated either by money, in the cases of those nations which pay high salaries, or else by desperation if they cannot get a job elsewhere. This self-inflicted misery grows daily as each petty annoyance is transformed into a source of conflict, hostility, and sometimes hate.

The writer knows of several examples of young teachers who went to Benghazi motivated almost entirely by the salaries being offered. For a year they (the young men in question happened to be British) existed in the gloomiest of conditions, depressed and depressing, counting each day as it went by. They spent most of their time criticizing their hosts and the host culture without finding a single good point. One of them, a soccer enthusiast, never attended a single soccer match in a country whose number one sport is soccer. Even more tragic was the return of this teacher for a second year of unhappiness and gloom.

Other examples of the temporary-minded set who encounter difficulties are those who, though married and with families, arrive alone, again, usually with the idea of making money and returning home after a year or two. Inevitably they discover how unhappy they really are without their families. Once again the host country becomes the target for their vindictiveness and virulence.

Experience has shown that those who settle in comfortably and enjoy their new surroundings are the most successful. Moreover, until you actually settle in, it is difficult to be professionally motivated to the degree that is required to carry out your duties to the fullest extent possible.

At one time or another, depression hits everyone who is far from home for a protracted period. This dépaysé feeling can be lessened if the person going abroad brings along a few mementos of his family, home, and friends.

Alienation is also to be avoided. It is often characterized by an attempt to construct a "compound" attitude and life style. Here the person goes from work to home and back to work without integrating himself into the community. His activities are almost always shared with the same group of people. These "friends" are usually of the same nationality. (Business and pleasure with the same people is often a source of friction.) There is an attempt to reduce contacts as much as possible with the host nationals. This self-imposed alienation is the easiest thing in the world to carry out, and it can continue for years if need be. Housing in a single physical compound reinforces this attitude as the immediate community becomes set apart, something special. A "survival" attitude may set in, "us" against "them". Everyone, of course, has this choice, but people who do opt for the "compound" life style are not maximizing the rich potential of their experiences abroad. Effort is required if you are to step out of your ordinary and familiar mental set; many are not willing to take that plunge.

So it is urged that teachers abroad take advantage of the multinational community in which they find themselves. The author knows one American family in Benghazi that illustrates very well the successful acclimation to multinational life. The man and woman both work at the University, and their children attend the French School. Their friends include Libyans, Palestinians, Swedes, Indians, Eastern Europeans, Frenchmen, Britons, Syrians, and Egyptians, in addition, of course, to Americans.

Benghazi also provides a good example of the kinds of activities which expatriates can organize and participate in with each other as well as with the host nationals. In Benghazi, there are: an amateur theatrical group, a choral club, chess clubs, a karate club, a yoga group, athletic groups and organizations, an international cooking class, religious gatherings, a dart league, and other activities which have been primarily instituted by expatriates. These supplement, of course, the normal activities and organizations which have been created within the local Libyan community.

In conclusion, let us say that successful adjustment requires a desire and a willingness to learn, enjoy, and share. It requires tolerance and patience. Above all, it requires an acceptance of a very real fact: these are years of your life, not a hiatus after which you can return to living.

Many of the difficulties encountered by the TEFL teacher will be the result of clashes over the ways in which education is perceived as an intrinsic value; i.e., the Westerner, raised in and inculcated with a certain normative concept of the role of education, will arrive brimming with certain expectations as to both the means and ends of education, expectations which will necessarily collide with different and often conflicting perceptions of the same ideas despite the obvious and stated intention by the host country to replicate a Western system. Obviously, host country educators and planners are interested in extracting the "good" aspects of Western education while eschewing those features which they consider inappropriate or harmful to their own culture. This, too, is a difficult task. The result, where the situation is handled insensitively or preremptorily, is again one of frustration and bewilderment. At the University of Garyounis, for example, many instructors were forever wondering why the institution couldn't be like Oxford or Cambridge or Essex. It would be foolish to lose track of the fact that most faculties in Libya are still young, and development takes time.

One of the problems is that we tend, in many cases, to equate the existence of an institution of higher learning with the automatic and inherent acceptance of education as a universal value, both as a means and an end. In the West, we are in various ways weaned on the value and power of education. Knowledge is power and thus the assurance of a secure and prosperous position in society. If someone is well educated and does not make it, he has obviously erred somewhere along the path, etc., etc.

In some Middle Eastern countries, the image of education is also distorted by an unconscious overglamorization whereby education (and despite its quality) is perceived as an instantaneous and golden key which must unlock any door to social and economic success.[15] In addition, almost by definition, most of the institutions designed with Western education in mind,

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15 In Libya, one of the major oil-producing states of the region, there is an interesting economic situation in which the sudden influx of petroleum revenue has hurdled the economy from an agro-pastoral level into a service-oriented merchant economy. This situation, effulgent with short-term payoffs, harbinges serious long-term difficulties for a country with little economic infrastructure. University graduates expect active participation and rewards from this system which is badly in need of skilled cadres. For a concise discussion of the economic situation, see Ruth First, Libya: The Elusive Revolution, (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1974), Chapter 9.

will be new and staffed by inexperienced administrators whose selection will not always have been based on merit or appropriateness. Skilled administrative manpower is in short supply, and often incongruous situations arise; e.g., a scholar steeped in Islamic studies and without any training whatsoever in administration may find himself running a major university or college. It may work, but, more often than not, ineffiencies will result.

If student perception of Western style education is often distorted and marked by chronic absenteeism, chronic unpreparedness, an absence of good study habits, apathy, and inadaptability even at the university level, the situation is further exacerbated by government interference, both deliberate and unconscious. If classes are incessantly cancelled for holidays, holy days, visiting dignitaries, political vagaries, and the slightest ministerial whim, then education does not have the priority it is purported to have. This does not mean that the system is bad, but it does signify that the declared ends and means do diverge. Nor does this mean that all knowledge is contained in books and that political activities and visits by dignitaries are devoid of educational value. The point can be illustrated, though, by taking the perhaps extreme example of the University of Garyounis where for the years 1972-73, 1973-74, and 1974-75 the actual period of classes totalled no more than four and a half months per academic year (with the exception of the Medical Faculty which operated more or less on a regular schedule). For the Westerner, this means more frustration and the further accumulation of irritations. Here again, our previous caveats must be reiterated: the situation is not identical throughout the Arab world, and in many of the countries this problem is minimal if it exists at all.

These points, then, beg the question of whether education is a revolutionary or evolutionary value in terms of its ready acceptance by the majority of those involved in the system and its effective incorporation into the fabric of the society. Experience and common sense would seem to indicate that an educational norm cannot be decreed overnight; it must be cultivated. In the Middle East, as in most of the developing world, student enrollments have increased dramatically at all levels, and as a result teachers are, in many cases, dealing with first and second generation

students. It would be foolish to expect that these students, whose attendance is often obligatory and whose parents often have never been to school, would come armed with the same burning desire to undergo this new process, equipped with finely honed study habits and the academic wherewithall to carry them through years of arduous study.

This deliberate cultivation of an educational norm is necessary if students are to be encouraged and rewarded by their families, e.g., in having a quiet place to study, adequate lighting and time to study. If a student is so bogged down with his chores that he has not got the time or energy to study, he will not be a high achiever. Thus, an ambience in the home, conducive to study, is vital. The point is that a parent who has been schooled will appreciate these factors better than one who has not. When enough parents become embued with this sense of education as a value, then the entire culture will reflect it. (In light of a cultural reflection and subsequent radiation of education as a value, it is interesting to compare the views of uneducated rural parents in underdeveloped countries with those of American immigrants who saw, close up, socio-economic advantages in education and encouraged their children to study so that the children would succeed better than the parents.) An American teacher with several years of experience in Algeria has written:

> In this region, the Aurès, rural life is a struggle against unkind nature and, recently, a seven-year struggle against a colonial military. Parents, eighty per cent of whom have never set foot in a school, do not necessarily think of education as a means of improving the lives of their children and they do not necessarily show a sustained interest in the success of their children's studies. The absence of an intellectual tradition - particularly in rural areas where, after all, the majority of Algerians live - hinders and discourages sons and daughters from developing psychologically to accept the risk of new challenges; to venture into the unknown.16

A corollary area of potential difficulty, often stemming from national-

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16 Young, Dorothy, "English as it may be Taught in Algeria," IVS Reporter, (August, 1969), p. 4.

ist fervor, is the rapid attempt to rid faculties of foreign teachers. The problem this can create is particularly acute in the case of language teaching where the presence of native speakers is not only of an obvious pedagogic advantage, but has shown itself to have a settling psychological effect on the students studying those languages. Often, and frequently unjustifiably, students feel "gypped" if they are assigned a host country national while some of their fellow students have native speakers. The problem can also manifest itself in the form of intra-faculty antipathies. Fortunately, this problem is not as widespread as it could be, and even at the University of Garyounis, most of the English teaching staff is composed of American, British, Irish, and other native speakers. Moreover, the Libyans on the staff are of a very high caliber.

The overall degree of government interference ought not to come as a surprise. In most cases, the educational institutions are part of a national educational system which differs substantially from the American concept of local school districts and independent school boards. This non-independence of most Arab (and Third World) institutions manifests itself in terms of the standardization of examinations, textbooks, the amount and selection of material which is to be covered,and so on. That these manifestations are further reflected at the tertiary level is only logical, and they may not be viewed as "interference" at all by the host country's central government. The universities are seen as instruments for fulfilling various national goals.

To the Westerner, alarming government interference is often visible in the forms of 1. de facto administrative centralization (sometimes in direct contradiction to the established "decentralized" machinery) and 2. the growth of miring bureaucracy. Saturated employment statistics and over-"specialization" are compounded by a severe crisis of responsibility which is reflected in the inability to handle problems, a mania for interpreting rules and regulations down to the letter, and the incessant passing of the buck. Having personal contacts may or may not be helpful in short-cutting the bureaucratic plexus.

As an example, we find that both situations 1. and 2. exist at the University of Garyounis where decisions normally taken by a department head or dean are being made at the highest levels by Popular Committees. The desire for democratization may directly, and needlessly, interfere with the efficiency of administration. Bureaucratic redundancy and bloatage is a nearly universal affliction, and the teacher needs to be prepared to deal with it.

The significance of events in the political area may be particularly distressing because it is the realm in which the foreign guest is least equipped to avail himself of means of redressing grievances. Moreover, the Westerner may feel frustrated at not being able to express sufficiently his criticisms of what he has perceived to be injustices. The Arab world is in the midst of political transition; upheavals and dislocations are not infrequent. It is safe to say that foreigners in general, and Americans

in particular, are expected to play the role of passive and non-participating observers in questions of world, national, and local politics. (Reference is not being made here to participation in normal institutional policy making in which foreign teachers may be requested to join in; however, even this activity may be limited.) To insure that this non-participatory status is adhered to, a relevant clause usually appears in teaching contracts; Algeria, Libya, and Sa'udi Arabia are examples where such a provision is expressly stipulated.

Since political participation is officially discouraged and contractually prohibited, common sense would dictate that discretion be exercised with respect to the discussion of matters which may offend or embarrass host nationals. From all that has preceded, it should be obvious that what may seem innocuous to Westerners, with their different sets of attitudes and social backgrounds as well as their different political preconditioning, may very well have the opposite effect on residents of another political climate. This does not mean that you will not be able to discuss or exchange ideas and opinions even of a political nature; in fact, very often because you are a Westerner, your opinions will be actively solicited. Students in particular, vocal, active, and critical, will often engage you in political questions which they would be afraid to broach with their fellow countrymen. The point is that discretion is to be underscored.

Corollary to the subject of politics, one ought to be prepared for the unexpected, although this should not be a reason for not settling down, completely and comfortably, into a new and foreign situation. Revolutions, coups, quiet administrative shake-ups, foreign policy reversals and so on may lead to recruitment changes and staffing reorganizations. All of these possibilities may entail changing the national composition of the faculty to prevent ideological inconsistencies.[17] The recurrent expulsions and subsequent reinstatements of the Peace Corps in several African and South American countries is illustrative of the point. More recently, one might cite the dismissal of several teachers (Western and Arab) from the Uni-

17 Not wanting to unduly frighten the prospective teacher, the writer hastens to add that physical danger, even during times of crisis, ought not to be exaggerated. Living in Benghazi during the Ramadan War, he experienced no adverse behavior or abuse of any sort, physical, oral, or otherwise. Local political problems will usually have a greater direct impact than international events.

versity of Garyounis for undisclosed reasons. Unable to defend themselves against unknown or unsubstantiated charges, the teachers were forced to resign themselves to inconclusive speculation.

Political events, especially where student disturbances and strikes are involved, will often disrupt the academic calendar. The recent widespread violence in Beirut and throughout Lebanon is an extreme example[18], but student strikes and demonstrations have occurred in numerous Arab countries and would seem to be a fact of life with which every teacher must now live. In certain cases, such interruptions may be officially sanctioned as in the case of the suspension of classes at the University of Garyounis in the spring of 1973 (then the University of Libya) due to the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution, or they may be the result of more serious endogenous and spontaneous causes such as the student demonstrations and subsequent violence in Benghazi (January, 1976), Tripoli and Benghazi (spring of 1975), and Egypt (January, 1971). That such disruptions are not confined to the progressive-revolutionary states is evidenced by the fact that the student strikes in large areas of Morocco closed down secondary schools for much of the 1971-72 and 1972-73 academic years.

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18 See AFME Report (January, 1976), p.5, and (July, 1976), p. 5.

IMAGE

Concurrent with the problems of attempting to implant an attitudinal norm of education and contending with government involvement are the questions of personal and professional image. Not only will the administration question the suitability of an extreme appearance or behavior, but students, often very stylish themselves, will be critical of an appearance which they find to be odd, insulting, or disrespectful. It is best to inquire as to what is appropriate in the way of dress, hairstyle, and general appearance. In the case of doubt, it is best to err on the conservative side.

The scope of image perception may include such pedestrian areas as personal transport, sociability, and general attitude (the latter is virtually impossible to hide). For example, in most countries of the Middle East/North Africa, a teacher who arrived outside his classroom on a bicycle would be frowned upon. In a country like Libya where many students own cars, including a large number of Mercedes Benz, to roll up in even a jalopy or motorcycle would be to risk ridicule. Eccentricities may be fashionable in American universities, but the appreciation of "characters" and colorful idiosyncracies will very likely be lost on students and administrators in the Arab world where teachers are held in very great esteem. In the same way, another factor that mitigates the acceptability of eccentricities is the closeness of age between new teachers and university students who have been brought up in a society in which wisdom and old age have long been associated. At the same time, over-concern with appearance by the administration can also be harmful if a person fits the image, but is otherwise unqualified.

Another aspect worth mentioning in terms of personal image might well be the benefits which can accrue if one is gregarious and on good terms with the members of the staff, the administration, and the student body. It is only common sense that a teacher who is well-liked by his students will be greatly appreciated by the administration, and, in an environment where so much daily business is dependent on personal rapport for efficiency and red-tape cutting, good personal relations are to be highly valued. This goes for business outside the teaching domain as well. For example, if you are recognized as a friendly and regular customer by a bank clerk, this will

probably facilitate your being served as you throng up with the others (the lack of lines is easily and quickly perceived by even the most obtuse!).

Linguistically, the Arabs are incredibly tolerant, and, in most cases, they are most appreciative of anyone who attempts to learn Arabic. This is especially true in those countries where Arabic is the only official language. (It would not be unusual, though, in the Maghrib - Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia - to receive an answer in French to a question posed in Arabic.) Learning even a few greetings and expressions can endear you to the hearts of the administration with whom you will have continual bureaucratic dealings. Moreover, students seem to respect a teacher who demonstrates an interest in their language rather than merely flaunting the merits of his own. The pedagogic advantages of speaking Arabic are, of course, countless, especially in terms of contrastive and error analysis and fathoming the linguistic problems peculiar to Arabophones. (See list of works appended.) As language teachers know only too well, learning a language successfully requires persistent hard work and incentive. It was a bit baffling, nevertheless, in Libya where all signs, notices, documents, and official writing are in Arabic to see how many Westerners, teachers included, could not read or write their own names in Arabic even after four or five years. For those interested, though, a "hello" can bring about the unexpected; a sentence can move a mountain.

Problems of personal image are rapidly being supplemented by another image-related phenomenon common to many countries, especially those with ample financial resources: that of requiring impressive and excessive academic and experiential qualifications, especially Ph.D.'s. The search for prestigious qualifications is partially a response to exterior criteria: many Westerners, themselves obsessed with doctoral qualifications, will evaluate Arab institutions and prospective graduate students on the "strength" of the university's faculty. Moreover, when Ph.D. requirements are further linked with nearly impossible experiential qualifications, many good Ph.D.'s with less experience or experienced teachers who do not possess doctoral degrees, may be dissuaded from applying.

Obviously, legitimate needs for Ph.D.'s in English do exist, but one often senses a double-barrelled drawback: a desire to impress coupled with

a misunderstanding of the qualification itself. The University of Garyounis, like so many others, has experienced this phenomenon in recent years, and it can be a problem of major proportions. It often favors the hiring of unsuitable teachers, reduces the effectiveness of the curricula, and then, because of the inappropriateness of qualifications which leads to the inevitable frustration and professional malaise, it insures an even more rapid turnover in staff.

The most salient feature of the Ph.D. craze is really the underutilization of Ph.D.'s once they are hired. Hiring a Ph.D. in linguistics to teach linguistics has obvious merit, but if the Ph.D. in linguistics teaches only two hours of linguistics a week (or none at all!) and must devote another twelve to fourteen hours to teaching basic English to first year students, he will probably get fed up and leave. Moreover, it is dubious that he can effectively teach English as a Foreign Language if he has not been properly trained. The same holds true for the Ph.D. in drama who ends up teaching one class a week in drama and spends the remainder of his time teaching specialized English to medical or law students.

Finding a solution to this problem is of critical importance if sound curricula and interested, devoted staffs are to be maintained and severe inefficiencies of manpower and resources are to be reversed. The thrill of having a host of Ph.D.'s appearing in a catalogue and teaching English is of little consequence if a group of qualified B.A.'s and M.A.'s could do an equal or better job. It is encouraging to note that, apparently mindful of past experiences, recent advertisements for teaching positions in Libya have, in fact, requested qualified and experienced B.A.'s for this country that has a tremendous need for good English language teachers.

It is urged that American teachers going abroad, especially those with Ph.D.'s and those in literature and drama, investigate as much as possible what they will be assigned to teach. Course assignments should never be assumed. For those who have no particular preference, they should still be mindful of their own qualifications and realize the potential problems and embarrassment which can arise when teaching an unfamiliar subject. TEFL-ers would be wise to indicate, when applying, their specializations: technical, commercial, legal, etc. It would also be of interest to those with several job offers to inquire as to what particular language skills are emphasized within the curricula.

WOMEN

No discussion of the image of teachers would be complete without some mention of the way in which women teachers are perceived in the Arab world. Generally speaking, Western women, in conformity with the roles of their Arab homologues, will find more social restrictions and a greater need for personal discretion than is usual in their native lands. This will be especially true of younger women if they desire to maintain the respect of their students and the other members of the community.

The problems are real, and yet with common sense and knowledge of the cultural mores and expectations, they can be successful teachers. The writer can point to numerous individual examples of women, both young and old, who have taught successfully in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and other countries. He can also point to examples which have had unhappy endings.

Women should be able and willing to cope with a more aggressive male behavior in terms of wolf-like whistles and other vocalic equivalents, remarks from passers-by, and indiscreet physical touching. All of these are similar to behavior patterns often complained of in Italy and other parts of southern Europe. In some areas, Arab women will endure the same treatment; in others they will be immune.

The following guidelines may be of help to the female teacher:

1. Cities and very large towns will provide more freedom of movement and a generally more cosmopolitan atmosphere.
2. Two or more women living together will appear healthier and allay suspicions.
3. Being friends with female Arab colleagues and other Arab professional women will enhance the desired image.
4. Dressing in an appropriate and acceptable fashion is to be emphasized. Follow trends, don't set them.
5. Avoid hitch-hiking, lounging in cafés, and other behavior which is not shared by Arab women in similar circumstances.
6. Discretion in relations with men is paramount.

If a female is not willing to make some social concessions and swallow her liberated pride to a degree acceptable to the host country, then she is probably better off not going. Many Western women have successfully worked

and taught in the Arab world and have contributed to the development of the countries of the Middle East and North Africa. Arab women are struggling to achieve new roles and objectives; one of them is a dignified professional status. They can probably best be assisted in their struggle by being able to point to other successful female professionals.

COËD EDUCATION

A few pertinent remarks about the trend toward coëd education in the Arab world may be instructive. In most Arab countries, university level education is mixed. This is the case in Libya and across North Africa as well as in the countries of the Fertile Crescent and Egypt. In the Gulf and Peninsular states, e.g., the University of Kuwait and the University of Riyadh, classes are generally segregated according to sex.[19] Moreover, even where classes are mixed, women may be in a great minority.

The presence of women in a class has obvious merits, not least of which are the pedagogic ones of using females as feminine examples for everything ranging from pronouns to acting out female roles in skits, dialogues, and the multifarious classroom needs which arise. The attempt to create surrogate "women" which usually entails a reticent Arab male (or his teacher!) speaking in a squeaky voice, will be amusing and bring the house down with laughter, but must be carefully controlled if total chaos is to be avoided. Moreover, it may end up with the surrogate being laughed at and ridiculed by his peers.

If you have women in your class, appreciate that they may be shy and reticent to appear in front of a class, for example, as a participant in a dialogue. On the other hand, they may not be timid at all and may, in fact, revel in the legitimacy which is endowed by being called on to speak. Shyness may vary with nationality; the writer found Egyptian and Palestinian women to be less reticent to speak than Libyans.

In most Arab countries, Western style dating is still not common, and it is worth noting that many universities provide one of the few places where young men and women can get together. This practice may affect your own life style, too: to walk into a cinema and see an ocean of male heads can be depressing for a Westerner.[20] Classes with all male casts can be equally unnerving.

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19 That even this may change is implied in a recent ad placed by a Sa'udi institution: "The Medical College of the University of Riyadh invites applications for both men and women, but posts have to be filled to allow for separate instruction to men and women in segregated classes for the time being." (emphasis is the author's) The Times Higher Education Supplement (London), February 6, 1976, p. 24.

20 Behavior patterns in movie theatres may also appear unusual: when the Westerner is laughing, the rest of the audience may be crying and vice versa. One must also get used to expressive apico-alveolar clicking, talking, and noise. Forewarned is forearmed.

KNOWING STUDENTS

Another significant point, and one not sufficiently appreciated, is that the teacher should know his students. First of all, he should know them by name. This is not the easiest task in the world since you may have eight Muhammads and six Ahmads in every class. The formulas for establishing complete names vary from country to country, but there is a trend towards the Western practice of limiting the names to three (first, middle, and last), e.g., in Sa'udi Arabia. In addition, some attempt at standardization of spelling is greatly needed to prevent each of the Muhammads from writing his name in his own transliteration system which he may also change from time to time. Moreover, when filling out applications and forms, difficulties often arise from things which we often take for granted, such as an instruction to write "last name first" or to use "Christian name".[21]

Furthermore, in Libya, where students come from many countries, it was worthwhile to know, not only the personalities of the students, but also their nationalities, religions, and regional provenance. By doing this, you improve your ability to pose questions with interest and variety. In a commercial English class, for example, you can ask Muhammad, the Sudanese, what the major exports of Darfur are, then jump to 'Umar, the Egyptian, then Zaynab, the Tunisian. The same holds true for regional differences when all the students are from the same country. Knowing small villages and local place names will be impressive and appreciated in addition to being useful in diversifying examples. At the same time, you can avoid unpleasantries if you can head off embarrassing questions by learning what the students' sensibilities are. (This is also true in dealing with the administration and bureaucrats in general. For example, to tell Mr. Muhammad that he is the most efficient clerk of country X whom you have ever met only to find out that he hails from country Y can be an embarrassing experience.)[22]

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21 Statistical records are often unreliable and choppy. For this reason, other commonly assumed information may not be available, such as birthdates. This can be a problem for students taking the TOEFL or other foreign administered exams. In some countries, students "adopt" birthdays to avoid difficulties where such information is required.

22 Be prepared to be addressed as Mr. John, Mr. Frank, Miss Linda, etc.

CHEATING

Cheating is another problem which is ubiquitous and has perhaps some deep causative factors different from those normally found in the West. It should be mentioned that the perceived gravity of cheating will depend on many factors. Differences in perception may vary markedly among the administration, staff, and students.

Often it appears that students who are caught cheating do not exhibit the same type of guilt-ridden feelings of their Western homologues. There are obvious and comparable social and economic pressures on the students to do well, but the blatant and sophomoric character of cheating which does occur may contain additional cultural influences, not least of which is the compelling desire to help a friend. This may go back to differing views on social obligation, kinship ties of a tribal nature, or 'asabiyyah-type solidarity.[23] The scholar, Raphael Patai has described the Arab "kinship culture":

> As a broad generalization one can say that the 'asabiyyah of the old Arab tribal society survives in practically the same form and with the same intensity among those Bedouin Arabs whose life forms have changed little in other respects. Where modernization intrudes, tribal and family cohesion must gradually give way. The same gradual weakening of the traditional intensive forms of group cohesion can be observed in the settled Arab society as well. Since modernization is more advanced in the cities than in the villages, more of the group cohesion is preserved in the rural than in the urban sectors. Nevertheless, even in thoroughly Westernized upperclass urban Arab families, the claim of kinship is still much stronger than anything known in the West. Arab culture can still be termed "kinship culture," and is still characterized by "familism" as it has been in the past.[24]

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23 'Asabiyyah is a combined loyalty, courage, and will based on a strong sense of social and tribal affiliation and solidarity. In the past, it formed a prescriptive, solidaristic norm which was the basis of much of Ibn Khaldūn's socio-political analysis of history. He further held that Islam reinforced this natural tribal 'asabiyyah. More recently, Muhammad 'Abduh, the Egyptian Islamic reformer, spoke of the "subjective sentiment" of 'asabiyyah "which remains so important a factor in contemporary solidarity of Muslim Arabs." Leonard Binder, The Ideological Revolution in the Middle East, (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1964), p. 107.

24 Raphael Patai, The Arab Mind, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), p. 94.

Administrators are well aware of the problem and in some cases appear almost paranoid, to the extent of erecting complicated and challenging examination control systems. Periodic scandals seem to confirm the administration's suspicions of the necessity of such arrangements. Most Westerners seem to live with the cheating, but more care may be required in classroom quizzes and testing situations if they are to serve their intended purposes. Corollary to this question is the problem of homework copying which, in the experience of this writer, was so pervasive as to call into question the whole concept of written homework assignments.

TEFL AND THE CURRICULUM

Another area of potential difficulty for the TEFL teacher in the Arab world is the role of English in the curriculum as perceived by the students, the administration, and the staff including those faculty members who are in no way connected with English or language teaching. Response will vary and often depend on: 1. the historical preconditioning of the country and attempts to impose a colonial language on the populace and/or elite groups 2. the existence of bi- or tri-lingualism 3. the impact and status of minority groups 4. the political and economic orientation of the incumbent regime 5. the levels and extent of literacy 6. the degree of cultural awareness and the implementations of policies intended to extol that awareness and foster a cultural renaissance.

All of these factors will color the student's perception of the need to learn English, and accordingly, they will influence his willingness and desire to undertake a concerted study. Furthermore, different conditioning factors will affect not only his academic motivation but in many cases will actually affect his ability to learn by presenting him with different sets of language learning problems in terms of varying linguistic interferences.

For instance, in the Maghrib, students who have learned French (and results vary considerably) will often face English language instruction with little exuberance, feeling confident that French will be sufficient for their needs. This differs from, say, the situation in Egypt, the Sudan, the Yemens, and Jordan where the preconditioning and extant professional, economic, and social situations would favor the learning of English as a second language. In Libya, which is currently experiencing a revival of Arab culture, there is no second language and while the English language exists in school curricula from the primary schools on up, the motivational factor seems to be contradicted and undermined by the social and political realities. This is one reason contributing to the generally low standards of English, most strikingly apparent at the universities in Libya. In the universities,

where most courses are taught in Arabic, students rank English well down on their lists of academic priorities. This is manifested in terms of time allotted for homework, preparation for examinations, absenteeism, and general level of interest. Moreover, many of the students at the University of Garyounis did not seem to differentiate between skill acquisition with respect to English language learning and non-skill, data/knowledge accumulation. The result was that students found it was difficult to cram for a language exam whereas they could for many of the other subjects. (Cramming is a major problem and is probably encouraged by the administration's policy of allowing month-long reading periods between the end of classes and the beginning of exams.)

Quite obviously, the incentive to learn English will be affected in many cases by a student's perception of its ultimate utility to him; thus, motivation will vary even among the departments of a university. A medical student may find it much more useful than, say, a geography student. However, utility and incentive are not the only sources of trouble; curricula and staffing must also reflect perceived priorities.

Bilingualism will affect learning a third language with both positive and negative results. A knowledge of French or Italian may establish familiar linguistic patterns and sets as well as provide cognitive lexical advantages. However, as stated above, it may mitigate perceived need and desire and, in some case, also may require a certain amount of unlearning in the event of second and third language interference. Thus, students from Morocco and Northern Yemen will have different language learning problems, and some of them can be directly attributed to the prior existence or non-existence of a second language.

The status of the TEFL teacher within his institution may also reflect the perceived priority of English language study by the administration and staff members in other departments. This reflection may be manifested in terms of cooperation by the administration in such mundane issues as the assignment of rooms, preference in examination scheduling and so on. However, if too low a priority is established, the lack of cooperation and subsequent financial deprivation or "squeezing" may directly affect the de-

velopment of curricula, the adequate provision of textbooks, and, ultimately, the maintenance of professional morale. The danger is that the TEFL teacher, convinced, perhaps incorrectly, of the vital importance of English in his institution, may feel that, due to inadequate attention, his entire program is suffering. Fortunately, the trend within the Arab world seems to be in the opposite direction, even in the Francophone states where English is increasingly recognized as the international language of business and technology. Nevertheless, the point is made and deserves consideration by the prospective TEFL-er in the area.

Attempts to teach some English to everyone may turn out to be less efficient in terms of economic planning and utilization of resources than a program which focuses on those specializations which would benefit most. For example, in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Garyounis, all incoming students had been required, until recently, to take the basic English course (most of them had had at least six years of English already). In addition, students who had completed the freshman year continued to receive small amounts of English (known as Other Departmental), usually two hours a week, as they pursued their specialization: archaeology, geography, history, etc. In an overwhelming number of cases, these two groups, freshmen and O.D. students, were characterized by low motivation and poor achievement, Furthermore, the large numbers of these students increased the burden on the already undermanned staff.

The proponents of the "total exposure" approach, both staff members and administrators, Libyan and native speakers, were unmindful of the practical realities of the situation which, it is reiterated, were often excruciating for the teachers (frequently the Ph.D.'s in literature!) and students alike. Significantly, this situation occurred when serious English language staff deficiencies were crippling the Faculty of Economics and Commerce (where statistics and other high-powered mathematics courses are taught in English) and the Faculties of Medicine and Law.[25] The recent decision to begin English in the first year of specialization ought to alleviate some of the strain on the English teaching staff by permitting them to concentrate on English language majors and the high priority specialization areas.

25 The situation in the Faculty of Law was particularly distressing: one teacher was required to teach several hundred students in a large lecture hall 2 hours a week. Students complained incessantly about the teachers, and the administration couldn't understand why the frequent roulette-wheeling of new teachers which ensued didn't satisfy student demands!

LINGUISTIC PROBLEMS

It is beyond the scope of this paper to analyze the linguistic problems which the study of English presents to speakers of Arabic. Needless to say, special problems of a phonological, grammatical, semantico-cultural, and orthographic nature do exist (e.g., the absence of [p] , [v] , and [ŋ] in Arabic, the confusion of "very" and "too" which are represented by the same word in Arabic, spelling difficulties especially with respect to vowels which are usually omitted in written Arabic, the contrast between the isolating nature of Arabic and the relatively agglutinative character of English, different rules governing the formation of consonant clusters, difficulties in teaching concepts of time and time markers such as "already" and "yet", punctuation, and so on.) Arabic and English are also non-cognate languages, and lexical development is an area which requires a lot of attention. Teaching stylistics will also require special work.

To aid those interested in becoming familiar with such problems, a list of readings has been included at the end of the paper. A sound understanding of the Arab student's particular problems in learning English ought to aid the English teacher in designing a sounder program. Regional variations in colloquial Arabic must also be considered. Finally, the implications introduced by Arabic diglossia must be weighed.

CONCLUSIONS

The primary intent of this paper has been to identify some of the perceptual areas in which the TEFL teacher, newly arrived in the Arab world, may encounter difficulty due to cross-cultural differences and attitudinal dissimilarities. The discussion has been by no means exhaustive, but to the extent that it will mitigate culture shock and professional frustration by providing a framework of perceptual and behavioral discernment and understanding which can then be translated into a more enjoyable, productive, and rewarding stay, then it has been a success.

Obviously, the causative aspects of behavior are often more difficult to determine than is the behavior pattern itself, and, no doubt, opinions as to the seminal reasons behind certain activities and phenomena described above will vary; nevertheless, the resulting awareness that attitudinal behavior is largely cultural and not to be cursorily dismissed as "crass" or "silly" will go a long way towards stimulating others to consider and examine behavior in the Arab world, and that, in itself, will be a step in the right direction.

Also, to the extent that Arab readers better understand some of the things which Westerners find bewildering, frustrating, and annoying, it is also worthwhile. A better comprehension of the underlying difficulties should also enable Arab institutions to improve their own image by strengthening their capacity to handle public relations, an area which is too often neglected.

Assumption is the attitudinal projection of one's own cultural behavior and environment, and, if nothing else, one should be aware of the dangers implicit in assuming in new socio-cultural surroundings. What that means in practical terms is that the normal prophylactic processes of inquiry, verification, clarification, and reiteration will probably have to be expanded. If assumption, based on personal experience in the case of the known and stereotype and projection in the case of the unknown, is risky for personal and social adjustment in a foreign culture, it also includes a professional parallel for the teacher: one ought not to unconsciously or unfairly ascribe or impose upon Arab students the background, training, sophistication, or attitudes of his Western counterpart. Certainly, many Arab students do approach and sometimes coincide with the American teacher's preconceptions, but more often than not, the East-West dichotomy with its accompanying cleavages will continue to affect the entire Arab cosmos. Where such differences persist, patience and understanding will probably determine which side of the challenge/frustration coin will win the toss.

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